DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 151 628 CG 012 206

AUTHOR Houser, Betsy B.
TITLE Student Compliance and Attitude: A Function of Classroom Control Technique.
PUB DATE Aug 77
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (San Francisco, California, August 26-30, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Cheating; *Class Management; Classroom Environment; *Classroom Techniques; *Discipline; Intermediate Grades; Research Projects; *Student Attitudes; *Student Behavior; Student Teacher Relationship
IDENTIFIERS *Coercion

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effects of a teacher's classroom utilization of certain means of social influence or bases of social power (reward, coercive, referent, legitimate, and informational) upon: (1) level of student compliance, and (2) attitude of the student toward the teacher. A total of 588 white, middle-class fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students participated in the study. The findings revealed significant differences in both student compliance (cheating) and attitude as a function of power base strategy. Coercive power produced both the highest amount of compliance and the most favorable attitudes. A significant positive correlation was obtained between student compliance and attitude for the six treatment groups utilized. Precautions concerning the interpretation and possible application of the findings are noted. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED151628

Student Compliance and Attitude: A Function of Classroom Control Technique[a]

Betsy Bosak Houser

Department of Psychiatry

University of California, Los Angeles

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

B.B. Houser

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

[a]Paper presented at American Psychological Association meetings, San Francisco, August-September 1977

CG012206

Abstract

Effects of a teacher's classroom utilization of certain means of social influence, i.e., bases of social power (i.e., reward, coercive, referent, legitimate, and informational [French and Raven, 1959]) upon 1) level of student compliance and 2) attitude of the student toward the teacher were examined. A total of 588 white, middle-class fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students participated in the study. The findings revealed significant differences in both student compliance (i.e., cheating) and attitude as a function of power base strategy. Coercive power produced both the highest amount of compliance and the most favorable attitudes. A significant positive correlation ($p < .01$) was obtained between student compliance and attitude for the six treatment groups utilized. Precautions to the interpretation and possible application of the findings are noted.

Student Compliance and Attitude: A Function of Classroom Control Technique

Betsy Bosak Houser
Department of Psychiatry
University of California, Los Angeles

One of the primary concerns of many student teachers is classroom control. After completing their teacher training they leave the security of their student status to take on the complex and sometimes frightening role of the classroom teacher. Many of these young men and women worry about how to achieve student compliance with their requests, concerned that one student could, in a short time, disrupt the entire classroom.

The teachers' need for help in the area of classroom control has prodded a number of authors and researchers to work in this area (e.g., Haring & Phillips, 1972; O'Leary & O'Leary, 1972; Brown, 1971; McDonald & Nelson, 1959; MacDonald & Tanabe, 1973; Johnson & Bany, 1970; Addicott, 1958). These authors have suggested various techniques by which a teacher can maintain order in the classroom, ranging from alternative classroom seating patterns (McDonald & Nelson, 1959) to the more recent work in the area of behavior modification (MacDonald & Tanabe, 1973; O'Keefe & Smady, 1973; Selby & Weinberg, 1971; Hewett, 1968; Brown, 1971).

Since the maintenance of order and control in the classroom tends to be rated by teachers as both a major difficulty (DeFlaminis, 1976) and a source of severe anxiety (Coates & Thoresen, 1974), this study was designed with the aim of helping to explore the effectiveness of various classroom control techniques. The study examines the utility of certain means of social influence, hereafter referred to as social power (French & Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965), as they may be typically used in the classroom to induce compliance.

Social power has been defined as the potential of one person to influence

the behavior, attitudes, beliefs or cognitions of one or more persons (Levinger, 1959; Lippett, Polansky & Rosen, 1952; Dahl, 1957; Cartwright, 1959; French & Raven, 1959). French and Raven (1959) define the bases of power as the means of influence O (i.e., the social agent) invokes in attempting to sway P (i.e., the person) in the direction O chooses. They point out that this relationship between O and P can be characterized by several qualitatively different variables, which distinguish the six bases of power (i.e., reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert, informational) from one another.

French and Raven define the bases of power by illustrating that 1) reward power is based upon P's perception that O is capable of mediating rewards for him, 2) coercive power is based upon P's perception that O is capable of mediating punishments for him, 3) legitimate power is based upon P's internalized standards which dictate that O has a legitimace right to prescribe behavior for P, 4) referent power is based upon P's identification or desire for oneness with either O or a particular group, 5) expert power is based upon P's belief that O has some special knowledge or expertise and 6) informational power is based upon the specific content of O's communication with P.

Methodology

Subjects. A total of 588 subjects participated in the study, 297 female and 289 male, from 24 separate fourth, fifth and sixth grade elementary classrooms. All subjects were enrolled in one of five public elementary schools located in predominantly white, middle-class suburban areas of Los Angeles County.

Design. The study utilized a post-test only control group design with six distinct experimental groups. Five of the six groups were treated with one of the five forms of social influence being examined in the study (i.e., reward, coercive, legitimate, referent or informational power). The sixth test group was a control.

Each of the six treatment groups was composed of students from four separate fourth, fifth and sixth grade elementary classrooms. Every classroom was randomly assigned to one of the six experimental groups and each student participated in only one condition.

Instruments. The task chosen for the study to measure non-compliance was a self-instructional program with a 20-item post-test. Included within the post-test were seven factually inaccurate (sham) items. The sham items were constructed so that none or all of the five choices were correct. Since there were no factually accurate answers to these sham items, the answer designated as correct on the students' answer sheets could only be arrived at either by guessing or by looking at the answer sheets. A student's degree of non-compliance was thus easily identified by the number of sham items he or she answered "correctly" on the post-test. A seven-item questionnaire was designed to assess subjects' attitudes toward the social agent (O) and the story materials.

The power base statements which served as the treatment in this study were designed by actual elementary classroom teachers. The teachers were given a brief summary of each power base and then were requested to specify the exact wording they would use when employing each of the chosen power base strategies in giving directions to a class of students.

In addition to the power base statements being used in the study, a control statement was designed. The control statement informed the subjects not to cheat on the test; however, no explanatory statement was provided as in the power base condition. The same control statement was used in the four classrooms assigned to the control group. One statement, either the control or a power base, was randomly assigned to each of the 24 classes used in the study.

Procedure. Testing took place in the subjects' classrooms under the direction of two female experimenters (A and O). Experimenter A introduced Experimenter O to the students as being a student teacher whose future teaching

ability they were to evaluate after completing the materials O had designed. O then informed the subjects that they were to complete the materials and score their own papers with the attached answer sheet. The subjects were told to make a guess if they did not know the answer to a question. The subjects were also informed not to change their answers nor look at the answer sheet while taking the tests.

The subjects in the classrooms which were assigned to one of the five power base conditions were then given a reason or explanation describing why they should follow O's directions. The exact wording used for the explanation was determined by the pre-assigned treatment statement (e.g., sample coercive power statement: "If you don't do it the way I told you, then you will have to stay in at recess and do it over").

In an attempt to minimize the subjects' concerns and inhibitions arising from O's possible surveillance of their behavior, O sat with her back toward the subjects during the testing period. After the subjects had completed the test materials, A distributed the student attitude questionnaire which the subjects completed anonymously.

Data Analysis

Student Compliance. The effectiveness of the various power base strategies to produce compliance was analyzed through both analysis of variance and a series of planned comparisons. An F-test revealed a significant difference ($F = 3.00$, $df = 5,581$, $p < .01$) in the degree of compliance as a function of the experimental power base condition (see Table 1).

To help identify the significant differences among the groups in ability to control non-compliance, a series of planned comparisons (Duncan Multiple Range Test [Duncan, 1955]) were calculated. The results in Table 2 clearly indicate that coercive power was the most effective influence strategy in controlling non-compliance in the experimental groups, except for the informa-

tional group. Individuals in the informational power condition were observed to cheat significantly less than those in the control condition; however, no other significant differences were observed. Neither the legitimate, reward or referent power conditions were able to control cheating any more effectively than the control condition.

Student Attitude. To explore the relationship between the experimental groups and the student's attitude toward the teacher an analysis of variance and a series of planned comparisons were computed (see Table 1). The results indicate that the subjects' attitude toward O significantly varied as a function of experimental condition ($F = 2.34$, $df = 5,541$, $p < .05$). To help identify the source of variance in the subjects' attitudes toward O a Duncan Multiple Range Test was also calculated. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis which show that the subjects in the coercive power condition indicated significantly more favorable attitudes toward O than either those in the control, reward, informational or referent conditions.

Discussion

The results indicate significant differences in both student compliance and attitude do exist as a function of the power base used by the influencing agent. In this study coercive power was discerned to produce both the greatest amount of student compliance and the most favorable attitudes toward the teacher.

One possible explanation for this observed pattern of results centers around the concept of legitimate versus illegitimate coercion (French, Morrison & Levinger, 1960). French et al. suggest coercion is perceived as being right or proper in certain situations based upon the individual's moral values. In fact, they contend, the more O's coercion is perceived as legitimate or "right" the more would resistance to this form of influence be viewed as incompatible with P's personal value system regarding O's role and the appropriate use of punishment to gain conformity. Therefore, when coercion is seen as being used

legitimately the result may be that P holds a favorable attitude toward O and complies with O's request.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are potentially valuable for those in the classroom setting. First, the results of this study indicate that coercion was by far the most effective influence strategy at controlling the cheating among students. Moreover, a very strong positive correlation (.89) was observed between the effectiveness of an influence strategy in controlling non-compliance and the attitudes of the students toward the influencing agent.

However, a few precautions to the interpretation and possible application of the findings of this study should be noted. First, the teacher who uses coercion as a method of influence may serve as a model for her/his students' future behavior (Becker, 1964; Sears & Dowley, 1963; Stephens, 1973). Second, in response to coercion, problem children have been found to be twice as likely to persist in their disruptive behavior when compared with a non-threatening form of influence (DeFlaminis, 1976). Third, recent studies have concluded that a teacher's utilization of coercion correlates negatively with student learning, satisfaction and the extent to which a teacher's influence transcends the classroom (Jamieson & Thomas, 1974; Spady, 1973). Fourth, in a relaxed setting preschool children were observed to obey a previously positive adult more than a previously negative adult; whereas in an anxiety-provoking setting the children obeyed a previously negative adult more (Carlsmith et al., 1974). Finally, the various forms of coercive power used in this study appear to represent some of the most severe forms of discipline which a teacher can legally utilize in the classroom; therefore, because the threats and punishments from the onset are as severe as they can become, the ability of coercive power to control non-compliance over time may be drastically reduced.

Table 1. Mean Number of Sham Items Answered "Correctly" and Mean Response on Attitude Toward O Item as a Function of Power Base

Power Base	Sham Items	Attitude Toward O[a]	N
Coercive	3.15	1.49	92
Informational	3.50	1.76	76
Legitimate	3.73	1.61	111
Reward	3.95	1.75	110
Referent	4.10	1.85	89
Control	4.20	1.83	109

[a]Attitude toward O was scored on a five-point scale with a score of "1" equalling a highly favorable response.

Table 2: *t*- value Probabilities Between Treatment Groups for Level of Compliance

	Coercive	Informational	Legitimate	Reward	Referent	Control
Coercive	X					
Informational	NS	X				
Legitimate	.05	NS	X			
Reward	.01	NS	NS	X		
Referent	.01	NS	NS	NS	X	
Control	.001	.05	NS	NS	NS	X

Table 3: *t*- value Probabilities Between Treatment Groups for Attitude Toward O

	Coercive	Legitimate	Control	Reward	Informational	Referent
Coercive	X					
Legitimate	NS	X				
Control	.05	NS	X			
Reward	.05	NS	NS	X		
Informational	.05	NS	NS	NS	X	
Referent	.05	NS	NS	NS	NS	X

References

Addicott, I. O. Constructive classroom control. San Francisco: Howard Chandler, 1958.

Becker, W. C. Consequences of different kinds of parental review. In M. L. Hoffman & L. W. Hoffman (Eds.), Review of Child Development Research (Vol. 1). New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1964, pp. 169-208.

Brown, D. Changing student behavior: A new approach to discipline. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, 1971.

Carlsmith, J. M., Lepper, M. R. & Landauer, T. K., Children's obedience to adult requests: Interactive effects of anxiety, arousal and apparent punitiveness of the adult. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1974, 30, 822-828.

Cartwright, D. A field theoretical conception of power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), Studies in social power. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1959, pp. 183-220.

Coates, T. J. & Thoresen, C. W. Teacher anxiety: A review with recommendations. Final report, Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching, Stanford University, April 1974.

Dahl, R. A. The concept of power. Behavioral Science, 1957, 2, 201-218.

De Flaminis, J. A. Teacher responses to classroom misbehavior: Influence methods in a perilous equilibrium. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association meetings, San Francisco, April 1976.

Duncan, D. B. Multiple range and multiple F-tests. Biometrics, 1955, 11, 1-42.

French, J. R. P., Morrison, H. W. & Levinger, G. Coercive power and forces affecting conformity. Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1960, 61, 93-101.

French, J. R. P. & Raven, B. H. The bases of social power. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), Studies in social power. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1959, pp. 150-167.

Haring, N. G. & Phillips, E. L. Analysis and modification of classroom behavior. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972.

Hewett, F. G. The emotionally disturbed child in the classroom: A developmental strategy for educating children with maladaptive behavior. New York: Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1968.

Jamieson, D. W. & Thomas, K. W. Power and conflict in the student-teacher relationship. Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 1974, 10, 321-336.

Johnson, L. V. & Bany M. A. Classroom management. New York: Macmillan, 1970.

Levinger, G. The development of perception and behavior in newly formed social power relationships. In D. Cartwright (Ed.), Studies in Social Power. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1959, pp. 83-98.

Lippett, R. Polansky, N. & Rosen, S. The dynamics of power: A field study of social influence in groups of children. Human Relations, 1952, 5, 37-64.

MacDonald, W. S. & Tanabe, G. (Eds.) Focus on classroom behavior. Springfield, Illinois: Charles C. Thomas, 1973.

McDonald, B. & Nelson, L. Successful classroom control. Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Company, 1959.

O'Keefe, M. & Smaby, M. Seven techniques for solving classroom discipline problems. The High School Journal, 1973, 56, 190-200.

O'Leary, K. D. & O'Leary, S. G. Classroom management. New York: Pergamon Press Inc., 1972.

Raven, B. H. Social influence and power. In I. D. Steiner & M. Fishbein (Eds.), Readings in contemporary social psychology. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965, pp. 371-382.

Sears, P. S. & Dowley, E. M. Research on teaching in the nursery school. In N. L. Gage (Ed.), Handbook of research on teaching. Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1963, pp. 814-864.

Selby, J. & Weinberg, D. Incentive approach to classroom control. Grade Teacher, 1971, 88, 66-73.

Spady, W. G. Authority, conflict and teacher effectiveness. The Educational Researcher, 1973, 2, 4-10.

Stephens, T. M. Using reinforcement and social modeling with delinquent youth. Review of Educational Research, 1973, 43, 323-340.